

Emergency Contraception

Birth Control Guide for People With CF

Emergency contraception is safe and works well to prevent unwanted pregnancy. You can use this after having unprotected sex or a birth control failure. This may be when a condom breaks, your partner does not pull out in time, or you forget your birth control. There are two options for emergency contraception. When making decisions about emergency contraception, talk with your health care provider.

INTRAUTERINE DEVICES (IUDS)

Some IUDs can be emergency contraception. These include Paragard, Mirena, and Liletta. They must be placed within 120 hours (five days) of having unprotected sex. This is the MOST effective option for emergency contraception (more than 99% effective).

These IUDs work as well on day five as they do on day one. Try to see your gynecologist within the five-day window. If you cannot get an appointment, you can go to a health center like Planned Parenthood. They often have urgent appointments for emergency contraception.

THE “MORNING-AFTER PILL”

This pill is one that you take up to five days after having unprotected sex. It can reduce your chance of becoming pregnant. Levonorgestrel morning-after pills do not need a prescription. If your BMI is over 30, this pill may not work as well for you.¹

Ulipristal acetate is another kind of morning-after pill. You will need a prescription for this pill. If you are over 165 lbs, consider ulipristal as a form of emergency contraception.²

Talk to your doctor about which morning-after pill may be best for you. Both pills work best the sooner you take them after unprotected sex.

LEVONORGESTREL (LNG) MORNING-AFTER PILLS

There are many brands of LNG morning-after pills: **Aftera[®], AfterPill[®], BionaFem, Curae, EContra One-Step[®], Fallback Solo[™], Her Style[™], Morning After, My Choice[®], My Way[®], New Day[®], Next Choice[®], Opcon One-Step[™], Option 2[®], Plan B One-Step[®], Preventeza[®], React[™], Take Action[®].**

Names of birth control may change. Ask your obstetrician, gynecologist, or doctor to be sure your choice is still available.

LNG morning-after pills work by:

- **Delaying ovulation.** This gives extra time for sperm in the uterus or fallopian tubes to die before an egg releases. If the sperm cannot get to an egg, there cannot be a pregnancy.
- **Reducing the chance of fertilization.** They thicken cervical mucus so that fewer sperm get through the cervix to the fallopian tubes. This works better if you take the pill as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

You should take the levonorgestrel pill within three days of having unprotected sex. It works better the sooner you take it.³

Anyone, no matter your age or gender, can buy LNG pills over the counter. All brands, of any packaging or price, have the same dose of LNG. Your pharmacy may keep these pills behind the counter or locked in a case. You may need to ask the pharmacist for help, but you do NOT need to show a prescription or your ID to buy this medication.

“What if I can’t afford the cost of the morning-after pill?”

The cost of morning-after pills depends on the brand you choose. You can also ask your doctor to write a prescription for emergency contraception. With a prescription, your insurance may cover the cost. You can get birth control through telehealth. This includes emergency contraception. You may be able to get the morning-after pill for low or no cost. You can find this at places like Planned Parenthood or student health centers.

To find a low- or no-cost family planning clinic near you, visit womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/emergency-contraception. Enter your zip code under “Find a Health Center.”

ULIPRISTAL ACETATE (ella®)

ella is another type of morning-after pill. It also works by delaying the release of an egg. This is so there is no egg for the sperm to fertilize after having unprotected sex. This pill works better at delaying ovulation than LNG pills. It also works better for females with a BMI between 25 and 30. If your BMI is higher than 30 it may not work. You can take ella up to 5 days after unprotected sex.⁴

You do need a prescription for ella. You can get a prescription for ella through your:

- Primary care doctor
- Gynecologist
- Urgent care
- Student health clinic
- Community health center
- Planned Parenthood or similar family planning center

Telehealth may be an option. These offer access to emergency contraception:

- Plannedparenthooddirect.org
- Nurx.com/emergencycontraception
- Priktruby.com/treatments/emergency-contraception

Tip: Accidents happen. It can be hard to know when you may have unprotected sex or a birth control failure. Consider buying or filling a prescription for a morning-after pill to keep on hand. This is so you are prepared if you need it.

REFERENCES

1. Nguyen AT, Curtis KM, Tepper NK, et al. U.S. Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use, 2024. *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2024;73(No. RR-4):1–126. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.r7304a1>
2. Ulipristal acetate (ella®), <https://www.ella-now.com/>
3. Levonorgestrel (Plan B One-Step®), Planbonestep.com
4. Ulipristal acetate (ella®), <https://www.ella-now.com/>

This information meets the guidelines and standards of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation’s Education Committee.